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3. The Refractory Age

A M 865 157 The refractory age of the children among both the Akha and the Meau is very pronounced in both sexes at the age of from three to five. The defiant child, screaming, will strike out at adults and try to beat them or throw himself down on the ground, howling and kicking. The adults of both peoples do not pay much attention to these tantrums. Sometimes they speak to the children, but kindly, and try to divert them by giving them something to eat or the like. Such an attitude presumes, however, that the child's behavior is not a reaction to orders he has been given. If such is the case, the children are punished and, I was told, also beaten and forced to carry out the order in spite of their resistance. The parents, however, never complain about such outbursts of defiance on the part of the children and accept them as something to be taken for granted. In answer to my question as to whether the behavior of the child did not seem serious to them, the Meau told me: "This happens only with small children."

/72/ 4. Puberty

A M 881 [884] Neither among the Meau nor among the Akha does the beginning of puberty mean the slightest outward change in the normal life. Neither people has any ceremonial initiation in connection with it or an accompanying celebration of adulthood, since the latter, among them, does not coincide with the beginning of puberty (cf. the chapter, "Social Organization," section on "Organization of the Family"). Similarly, tattooing, masking, or circumcision in any form does not occur. Only the attainment of the age when one is capable of bearing arms plays a role (see the chapter, "Army and War").

A M [304] Depending on the nutritional level of the family, boys reach puberty at the age of fourteen to sixteen, girls somewhat earlier; in general this time point for both is considerably later than, for instance, for European Mediterranoid children. The behavior of the young people of the two tribes differs, however, as soon as they reach puberty.

A M [145]

7. Mental Development

A M 114 125 145 Unfortunately I was unable to test adequately either the children of the Akha or those of the Meau. A number of difficulties blocked this, especially the shortage of porters, which did not permit moving our test material. Moreover my test forms were designed for the mental world of primitives and could not be applied without further ado to a mountain people of Farther India with the mental capacity of the Akha, much less that of the Meau. It would have been necessary to revise my test forms, but we did not have the time to do this, especially since our funds were limited.

A M 157 856 According to our observations, however, the children of the Meau are more highly developed and surpass those of all the mountain tribes of Further India, including the Akha. Particularly striking among the Meau is a marked individualism, or rather a strong differentiation in comparison with the other tribes mentioned, which is already apparent even in small children. At the age of four or five distinct differences of character and talent are already evident. The Meau children begin to talk when they are one year old, those of the Akha somewhat later; at this age they are already able to say "father" and "mother" and a few other words. There are, however, some gifted children who speak even earlier and some without talent who are hardly this far at the age of two. One can say, however that at an average age of three and a half years the language of the children is almost equal to that of the adults.

A M 153 856 At the age of two the children are not yet able to eat by themselves; they learn this during their third year. The Meau children begin asking questions at the age of five, those of the Akha at the age of six. The children of the Meau do not bother to think up explanations of their own for things that are unknown to them, but rather in each and every case ask their parents or other adults of their community, and in this respect they are decidedly vivacious and active. The children of the Akha are less persistent in this questioning than those of

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A M 153 861 [157] the Meau. If they do not receive an adequate or satisfactory answer, they soon go on to something else. They themselves never try to explain unfamiliar things; on the otherhand, /83/ with strangers they are more active and less self-conscious in their questioning than the Meau children, who, to be sure, are curious, but remain shyly in the background.

Most of the children ask many questions, but there are also some who ask few. They want an explanation for everything that is inexplicable to them. They ask why the trees grow, who makes the rice, what kind of spirits there are, why the dog barks, why the father goes hunting, why one hurts himself when he falls down, why birds fly, and so forth. The adults attempt to answer these questions truthfully and to the best of their ability, but sometimes they themselves are at a loss. If they are unable to answer a question, they say: "Oh, you already know more than I do, why do you ask me?"

A M 153 856 ● 145 As far as learning ability is concerned, the Meau children, according to my observations, are extremely gifted; in my estimation, at least up to the age of six they are hardly less gifted than European children of the same age. The Akha children are somewhat less gifted. In all practical aspects and in the use of their bodies, the children of the Meau and Akha are more skillful and especially more perserverering and much tougher than children of the Schan /Shan/ and Lao at the same age.

A M [871] Comparisons with European children in school could not be made, since in northern Thailand neither the Meau nor Akha children visit any schools. Besides, there were no European children there as a basis for comparison.

8. Art in the Life of Children

A M 857 [534] The musical instruments of the adults (see the chapter, "Art," section on "Music and Musical Instruments") are precious and are not given to the children. I could not find any instruments for children, not even any that could be regarded as relics on the path of the development of the art. At most it

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Pictorial representations are also foreign to both peoples. Though the children had never before seen pictorial representations, at the age of three or four they recognized drawings and photographs that I showed them, provided, of course, the representation was within their range of conception. Archers with crossbows or pictures of work in the fields or of the slaughtering of pigs immediately aroused their attention, and they tried to imitate the scene portrayed or the position, for instance, of the crossbow-archer. /85/ When I showed them pictures of European settlements and houses, however, I was immediately assailed with questions: "What is this? Why do you live in such houses? What do you eat? Are there as many children among you? Are they as white as you?" If I showed a child a photograph in which he himself was represented amidst his comrades, he recognized his companions immediately, but only in exceptional cases himself. On the other hand pubescent girls or boys sometimes did find themselves in the pictures. At any rate, the old idea that such children do not recognize pictures or drawings was refuted time and again.

In order to test their drawing ability, I had children of both sexes and of all age levels make drawings. I gave the one to be tested paper and pencil and left him alone for an hour (Ill. 67).[1] The choice of subject was completely free. I prevented any influence from a third party and gained an insight into the mind of the child being tested. I have discussed the results of these experiments in detail in a special study (1) dealing

A M [114]

1. Bernatzik, VII.

with the drawings collected by me among various primitive peoples. In this present work it can merely be said that the boys of the Meau, as well as of the Akha, began to outgrow the scribbling stage at the age of ten, while at the age of fifteen or sixteen almost all the subjects tested were able to draw true to life. In each case I immediately afterwards wrote down the explanations given by the person tested. Sometimes I confronted a child days later with the drawing and asked him

1 A [See cat 116, p511 - ANALYST]

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A M 125 532 145 once more what he had represented. In all cases it turned out that the children remembered and repeated their first explanations, in other words, that they recognized what they had drawn.

The boys of both peoples do not draw designs, but figures exclusively; animals, plants, and hunting scenes, besides human representations, are predominant. While the Akha boys reach only a low level of development, it is significantly higher among the Meau. Moreover, there was a surprising similarity in the execution as well as in the choice of subject matter between the drawings of the Meau children and the drawings collected by me from Lapp children of the same age. In the case of the Akha drawings, /86/ however, this similarity was generally absent. In contrast to the Akha, there is furthermore among the Meau a strong factor of individual talent, which differs in the two sexes. The Meau girls are much more gifted than the boys, whereas among the Akha the achievements of the two sexes are fairly equal.

A M 125 531 532 145 As far as the girls are concerned, among the Meau they begin at the age of ten to draw ornamental designs; slightly older children contributed figure drawings and when somewhat older still, drew true to life. Thus, besides the ornamental designs, they also had a very good mastery of figures. Beginning at the age of seventeen figure drawing decreases among almost all the female persons tested among the Meau, and pattern drawing predominates. This is because the girls have a great deal to do with batik, and this work dominates their thinking. Even later, however, they have a technical mastery of figure-representation at a higher level of development, as was proved to me by the example of a woman who had seen drawings of the Lao and was immediately able to reproduce similar drawings from memory. The girls of the Akha showed considerably less talent. Most of them never went beyond the scribbling stage, and individual talent is little developed.

/86 cont./

A M 145 125 532 [153] The self-criticism that the children exhibit even at an early age was surprising. Some Akha children about ten years old repeatedly refused to draw because "their lines did not look like the things they wanted to draw." In contrast, the really primitive people, the Phi Tong Luang (1), behaved quite

1. Bernatzik, IV, pp. 174 ff.

differently. Here even the adults scribbled for hours and then explained to me circumstantially what the lines, which in no instance went beyond the scribbling stage, were supposed to mean.

In conclusion it should be said that neither among the Meau nor the Akha did the talent for drawing disappear at a certain age, as we often find among European children (see also the chapter, "Art," the section on "Painting, Sculpture, Ornamentation," and the chapter, "Talent, Knowledge, Character, Morality, and Manners").

/87/ d) Sexual Development

A M 836 Among the Meau as well as among the Akha, unmarried young people enjoy extensive sexual freedom, which is documented by other authors for the Meau of other regions as well (1).

1. Eberhard II, pp. 253, 255, 256, 258, 261; also Chin. Repos., 14, p. 110.

M 864 [513] The children of the Meau, separated according to sex, sleep in their own sleeping quarters or at least in their own beds; only the small children sleep with their mothers. They therefore have no opportunity to gather experience by observing the adults. If they occasionally ask questions of a sexual nature, the adults answer truthfully, provided that the M [825] children are somewhat bigger. Small children, however, are

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A 462 [342] [313] [252] The division of men's and women's work is quite similar among the Akha, who are not inferior to the Meau in industriousness. Among them, however, housebuilding is exclusively a task for the men, whereas the preparation of firewood, for which large trunks must often be chopped up, is one of the tasks reserved for the women. Cooking and the hulling of rice in the mortar are, to be sure, tasks of the Akha women, but the men very commonly help them.

A 461 857 No differently than among the Meau, there are scarcely any tasks for the Akha children that are to be performed exclusively by them; the situation in this respect is the same as among the Meau.

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Chapter 27

Anthropology

M 165 When one considers the poor hygienic conditions in association with the hardest physical labor (see the chapter, "Medicine"), it is truly astonishing that one comes across relatively many old people among the Meau. Also, I cannot agree M 145 [114] with Marabail (1) who in his work advocates the view that the

1. Page 463.

Meau grow old prematurely. On the contrary, I often marveled that the women, in spite of their work load, which was too hard M [841] for them physically, and even though no notice was taken with regard to the menstruation periods, actually do not lose their bloom any earlier than among our own people and in any case much less rapidly than among the southern Europeans.

A M 141 The Akha as well as the Meau are definitely small in stature. From the 20 women and men measured, the average heights amounted to:

/441 cont./

A M 145 164 The teeth among both peoples are strong and well developed and well preserved into old age, if caries and pyorrhea (see the chapter, "Medicine"), especially common among the Meau, do not cause them to fall out prematurely.

Both tribes also have well-developed ears; the shell A M 142 shows no signs of degeneration or atavism, although attached lobes and their absence can be found more commonly among the Meau, rarely among the Akha.

M 142 The eye of the Meau is small with a narrow eyelid slit, which is often placed obliquely. Apart from the Mongoloid fold (Ills. 53)[2] which is very common among these people, the lateral corner of the eye often lies higher than the medial one. Therefore little of the cornea is to be seen among the Meau. The eye color is dark brown.

A 142 The eye of the Akha is essentially different. It is large and /442/ almond-shaped (Ill. 6),[2] and the Mongoloid fold occurs only as an exception. The cornea is white and always quite visible; a higher placement of the lateral corner of the eye in comparison with the medial one is not rare. The color of the eyes is usually dark brown, sometimes even black.

M 142 As a rule (except for the Europoid types), the nose of the Meau is small, blunt, and quite deeply saddled; the bridge of the nose, protruding slightly only in exceptionsl cases, is otherwise broad and flat (Ill. 53). It becomes much wider at the bottom and at the sides toward the alae.

A 142 In contrast to this, the Akha usually have large noses with high bridges; even aquiline noses occur occasionally (Ill. 1). The bridge is narrow and slightly arched, usually very narrow at the root, but wider noses, especially toward the lower part, also occur (Ill. 6). They are never as flat, however, as those of the Meau. In isolated cases the bottom of the nose slopes upward somewhat toward the tip so that from the front one can see into the nostrils.

[1] [see cat, 116, p366- ANALYST]
[2] [" " " p14 - "]